

**NORTH PACIFIC FUR SEAL COMMISSION
FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING**

Tokyo, Japan

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Press Release

The North Pacific Fur Seal Commission adjourned its Fourth Annual Meeting on February 4, 1961. The Standing Scientific Committee of the Commission began its meetings on January 21, 1961, while the Commission began its sessions on January 30. A high degree of cooperation has been developed among the scientists, advisers and Commissioners of the four delegations from Canada, Japan, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. Very favorable progress was made on the research projects included in the Commission's program and on the other work of the Commission.

The North Pacific Fur Seal Commission was established under the provision of the 1957 Interim Convention on Conservation of the North Pacific Fur Seals signed at Washington on February 9, 1957. Each country is represented on the Commission by a Commissioner and Advisers. The Commissioners are Mr. William Sprules, Special Assistant to the Deputy Minister of Fisheries for Canada; Mr. Kunjire Nishimura, Director of the Fisheries Agency, Department of Agriculture and Forestry of Japan; Mr. Aleksander A. Ishkov, Minister of the U.S.S.R., Chief of the Main Administration of Fish Economy of Gosplan; and Mr. Arnie J. Samuels, Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife, United States Department of the Interior. Mr. Nishimura is Chairman of the Commission; Mr. Ishkov is Vice-Chairman.

The Commission has as its major responsibility investigation of the fur seal resources of the North Pacific Ocean. The objective of this investigation is to determine the measures which will make possible the maximum sustainable yield from these resources, with due regard for their relation to the productivity of other living marine resources in the area. In accordance with plans developed by the Commission, research agencies of the four Governments are carrying on research at sea, while United States scientists carry on research on the breeding grounds on the Pribilof Islands in the Eastern Bering Sea, and Soviet scientists do similar work on the Commander Islands in the Western Bering Sea, and on Robben Island in the Okhotsk Sea. The investigations are concentrated on dynamics of the fur seal populations, distribution and migration at sea, feeding habits, and harvesting methods.

In the course of its deliberation during the week, the Commission reviewed the results of the 1960 scientific research programs of the four Member Governments -- Canada, Japan, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States -- regarding the fur seals of the North Pacific Ocean.

It particularly noted the continued increase in the numerical size of the Robben and Commander herds and the progress being made on the Pribilof herd management program introduced in 1957 to develop the maximum sustainable yield from that herd. Other interesting facts reported include the following: Results of research on Robben Island

suggest that harem bulls are not nearly as faithful to their family duties as previously had been suspected. Some 83% of the harem bulls on one rookery on Robben Island remained with their harems for less than a month and even during that period were occasionally observed with the idle bulls on the bachelor grounds. Increased mortality of pups has been noted in recent years on the Pribilof Islands caused at least in part by overcrowding. This is being corrected through carefully controlled reductions in the number of seals. It has also been found that the natural mortality of young female fur seals of the Pribilof herd is considerably less than that of young males. The 1959 and 1960 research work also revealed that young tagged seals from the Pribilof Islands occurred in some numbers on the Commander Islands, and a few even went as far afield as Robben Island east of Sakhalin. The Commission also approved a coordinated plan for research during the 1961 season.

Investigations at sea will begin in early February on both sides of the Pacific. Investigations at the rookeries will begin in the early summer as the seals arrive at the end of their annual migration to the breeding ground.

Under the provisions of the Interim Convention, commercial harvesting of seals at sea is prohibited. All harvesting is done on the breeding grounds under the control of the United States on the Pribilof Islands, and under the control of the Soviet Government on Robben Island and the Commander Islands.

The U.S.S.R. Commissioner, Mr. A. A. Ishkov, was elected Chairman of the Commission to serve through the next Annual Meeting, and Mr. Arnie J. Suomala, the U. S. Commissioner, was elected Vice-Chairman.

It was agreed that the next Annual Meeting of the Commission would be held in Ottawa beginning February 7, 1962. The Scientific Committee will begin its meetings on January 29, 1962.
